



FEMA

STATEMENT OF
REYNOLD N. HOOVER
DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL SECURITY COORDINATION
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ON
EXECUTIVE BRANCH
CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS (COOP)

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Davis and members of the Committee. I am Reynold N. Hoover, Director of the Office of National Security Coordination, in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Homeland Security. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss FEMA's role in supporting Continuity of Operations (COOP).

FEMA was designated as the Executive Branch's Lead Agent for COOP and Continuity of Government (COG) by multiple authorities which also require that Federal Departments and Agencies develop COOP plans and procedures to support their essential functions. In our capacity as Lead Agent, I am proud to report that we have provided and continue to provide a wide range of support and assistance to the Federal Executive Branch in order to help Departments and Agencies develop this critical capability. Our assistance and support includes comprehensive planning guidance, significant outreach to national and regional Departments and Agencies, in-residence and deployed training, Executive Branch-wide exercises, and individualized Department and Agency technical assistance.

Program Guidance Support

As Lead Agent, one of our primary responsibilities is the development of program guidance to assist Departments and Agencies with building COOP plans that will support the performance of their essential functions under all hazard conditions.

To provide detailed guidance for COOP planning, we published a revised Federal Preparedness Circular (FPC) 65, “Federal Executive Branch COOP Operations,” in June 2004. FPC 65, originally published in July 1999, outlined the elements of a viable COOP capability and established that all Federal Agencies “shall have in place a viable COOP capability to ensure continued performance of essential functions from alternate operating sites” during any emergency situation that disrupts normal operations. Our new guidance builds on that premise and provides expanded guidance based on input received from a variety of sources, including the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

The product of a year-long, interagency development effort, the revised document combines all previous FPCs into one comprehensive planning document on COOP capabilities, tests, training, and exercises, and the acquisition of alternate facilities. We also expanded the FPC to include new and more definitive planning guidance on the essential elements of a viable COOP capability (i.e., Plans and Procedures, Essential Functions, Delegations of Authority, Orders of Succession, Alternate Operating Facilities, Interoperable Communications, Vital Records and Databases, Human Capital, Test, Training and Exercises, Devolution of Control and Direction, and Reconstitution). With input from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the General Services Administration (GSA) during the drafting of the new FPC 65, FEMA developed the new COOP guidance to incorporate many of the GAO’s previous recommendations for COOP capability improvement. For example, this new guidance includes detailed information on essential functions, discusses the importance of interdependencies between Departments and Agencies, and identifies telework as an option for COOP planners.

Further, because we view telework as a valuable tool that can enhance COOP capabilities, we continue to work with our partners at OPM to develop teleworking alternatives as a means to improve our overall preparedness posture. Because of the collective efforts of the Departments and Agencies in drafting the new FPC 65, we view its COOP guidance as the baseline document for Departments and Agencies to use in their COOP plan development, training program initiatives, and exercise participation.

In addition to the FPC, we continue to work closely with our Federal partners to identify other guidance needs and have produced a series of documents that are used nationwide by COOP program managers. These documents include COOP planning templates, self-assessment tools, informational brochures, and awareness materials that are widely distributed to the interagency community and are available online through FEMA's web site.

National Essential Functions Initiative

On January 10, 2005, Assistant to the President and Homeland Security Advisor, Frances Fragos Townsend, issued a memorandum entitled "Department and Agency Essential Functions." This memorandum outlines National Essential Functions (NEFs) that must be performed by the Federal Government in times of crisis. In addition, the memorandum requested that all Federal Executive Branch Department and Agencies identify their Priority Mission Essential Functions (PMEF) that support these NEFs.

We have been working closely with the Homeland Security Council (HSC) on this effort to coordinate, collect, and analyze the essential function data provided by Departments and Agencies in response to Ms. Townsend's directive. In that regard, we have been leading PMEF reviews in an effort to further strengthen COOP policy guidance provided to Departments and Agencies on the most critical of COOP planning activities – identifying those key government functions that must be performed in the face of all hazards. Our work in this area continues and we expect to incorporate the PMEF effort in future planning and exercises.

Interagency and Regional Support

To assist in Federal Executive Branch COOP capability development, we have established numerous interagency working groups at the Headquarters and Regional levels. The centerpiece of this effort is the COOP Working Group (CWG) in the National Capital Region, which was established in 1999. The CWG is comprised of 6 White House elements, 15 Departments and their sub-elements, and 61 Agencies representing their respective Headquarters. Also participating are COOP planners from the Legislative Branch (the Senate, House of Representatives, Library of Congress, and GAO), the Judicial Branch, and the District of Columbia. This group meets monthly and provides a forum for addressing COOP issues facing all Departments and Agencies.

At the Regional level, FEMA has established COOP working groups with many of the Federal Executive Boards (FEBs) and Federal Executive Associations (FEAs) across the country. These working groups are a means of providing COOP program guidance to Federal offices in the field. Our working groups in Boston, Metropolitan New York,

Buffalo, Albany, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, Albuquerque/Santa Fe, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Houston, New Orleans, Oklahoma City, San Antonio, Kansas City, St. Louis, Denver, Salt Lake City, Oakland/San Francisco, and Seattle are now being used as models for other FEBs and FEAs across the country.

Tests, Training, and Exercising

Since exercises are critical to identifying, assessing, and correcting COOP plan and program deficiencies, we have been concentrating on building a national COOP exercise program. Our initial focus was testing and exercising COOP preparedness for Executive Branch Departments and Agencies headquarters located in the National Capital Region. We have since expanded the program across the country in partnership with the GSA.

As you may recall, we conducted Exercise Forward Challenge 2004, the first-ever, full-scale COOP exercise for the Federal Executive Branch, on May 11-13, 2004. Forward Challenge 2004 required participating Departments and Agencies in the National Capital Region to relocate and operate from their alternate facilities. More than 2,500 individuals representing 45 Departments and Agencies and 332 organizational sub-elements participated in Forward Challenge from over 100 locations. Each Department and Agency developed its own internal COOP exercises that ran concurrently with the larger exercise. In addition, an interagency communications test was conducted as part of Forward Challenge 2004 to test interoperable communications among participating agencies' alternate relocation sites.

Due to the overwhelming success of Forward Challenge 2004, we have already begun preparations for Forward Challenge 2006. The Initial Planning Conference for the Exercise was conducted last month and was attended by 50 organizations. Forward Challenge 2006 will incorporate the significant changes to COOP policy since 2004 and will reflect updates to FPC 65, the implementation of the COOP Continuity of Government Conditions (COOPCON), the establishment of NEFs, and the development of PMEFs.

Like Forward Challenge 2004, the 2006 exercise will be a full-scale deployment of COOP capabilities. Departments and Agencies will be asked to alert their teams and relocate to their COOP site during business hours. Thirty major Departments and Agencies identified by the HSC will be required to participate, but all Federal Departments and Agencies are invited and encouraged to participate.

One of the most significant changes for Forward Challenge 2006 is that it will be an externally evaluated event and in many cases will be the first opportunity for Departments and Agencies to receive an operational assessment of their COOP capability. Our plan is to use future Forward Challenge COOP exercises, held every two years, as the main tool to assess COOP plans and operational programs for the Federal Executive Branch.

Our support, however, for COOP exercises is not limited to the Washington, D.C. area. Working with the FEBs and FEAs, our FEMA Regions, in partnership with the GSA, have conducted interagency COOP exercises in Cincinnati, Columbus, Detroit,

Cleveland, Houston, Denver, Seattle, Fayetteville, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Albuquerque/Santa Fe, and other cities. Over the next few months, the FEMA Regions will conduct interagency COOP exercises in Portland, OR, Atlanta, Kansas City, Philadelphia, and Denver. Other FEBs and FEAs across the country are also interested in conducting COOP training and exercises, and our FEMA Regions are working with them to support their needs. To help facilitate this effort, FEMA and GSA have fielded an interagency COOP exercise template called “Steadfast Response.” This exportable training package can be easily tailored to the individual requirements of FEB and FEA COOP exercises. We believe these training programs are an important component of the COOP assessment process as they assist Departments and Agencies in identifying those capabilities that must be enhanced or corrected to ensure performance of their essential functions in response to a “real world” event.

Alternate Facility Assessments

Over the last few months, we have also been conducting Federal Department and Agency Alternate Facility site visits to provide an assessment of current Department and Agency capabilities and to identify common issues facing the COOP relocation sites. We will also work with the COOP Interagency Community to address any issues that arise from these assessments.

COOP Training

COOP training has been a primary focus of FEMA during the last year. Working in close collaboration with OPM, GSA, and the CWG, we have developed and delivered the

COOP Managers Training (Train-the-Trainer) course. This three-day course is designed to train an interagency cadre of certified instructors in COOP program management so that they can take the course materials and train their Department and Agency COOP personnel. The course was first delivered in Boston and New York in July 2004 in advance of the Democratic and Republican National conventions. Since then, we have instructed the course nationwide. As of March 31, 2005, all 30 major Departments have participated in the 18 COOP Train-the-Trainer courses delivered in the National Capital Region and across the Nation. Two hundred and nine smaller Federal, State, local, and tribal organizations have also attended.

To assist the other branches of government, representatives of the Legislative and Judicial Branches have been invited to the training and have completed the course. A total of 682 Federal, State, and local officials have been trained and certified as instructors. One hundred and eight-five were trained in the National Capital Region area. An additional 41 course offerings will be provided and coordinated by FEMA across the country by the end of this Fiscal Year, including two courses in the National Capital Region, one offering at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute, Emmitsburg, Maryland, and another at the Noble Training Center, Anniston, Alabama. Because of the extremely high interest of the Judicial Branch, a special course offering for United States Courts personnel is planned for August 2005, at the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, in Washington, D.C. We anticipate making the course materials available online, through the assistance of FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI), in late 2005.

In addition to the COOP Train-the-Trainer course, we are finalizing other web-based training resources through EMI that will include a COOP Awareness course. This 2-hour module is intended as an overview of COOP for new employees and Senior Managers. We are also developing a course entitled “Introduction to COOP.” This 5-hour module is designed for COOP team members and will provide a more in-depth look at COOP and COOP requirements. Both courses are expected to be available by the end of next month and will be available through FEMA’s EMI Web Site.

Budget and Funding

The Fiscal Year 2005 Budget provided us with a significant increase in resources available to begin addressing some of the COOP areas that I have discussed with you today, or were identified in previous GAO reports. In addition to the enhanced COOP planning guidance, coordination with the HSC on NEFs, and significant COOP training and assessment capabilities, we are using Fiscal Year 2005 funds to begin procurement and installation of secure video-conferencing capabilities at Department and Agency alternate facilities, designing and deploying improved alternate communication systems between COOP locations, and the initial fielding of a classified Readiness Reporting System that will support our programs. We are confident that the President’s Fiscal Year 2006 Budget request for our government-wide COOP program coordination will build on the foundation of success we have established over the past several years. This foundation continues to rely upon the commitment and application of COOP resources at the Department and Agency level.

Conclusion

The ability of the Federal Government to deliver essential government services in an emergency is of critical importance. I believe that FEMA, in our role as Lead Agent for the Executive Branch's COOP and COG programs, has significantly enhanced the Federal Government's preparedness to perform its essential functions across the full spectrum of all hazards threats and emergencies. Working with our partners throughout the government, we will continue our leadership role by providing planning and programming guidance, conducting exercises and assessments, developing resource capabilities, and building the relationships necessary to ensure an effective government-wide COOP program that is coordinated and responsive to any threat or emergency.

Thank you for your time. I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.